

expected to drive him into a wildly idealistic
 and romantic
 art. In part it did. He dreamed amid the
 dinginess of
 mid-nineteenth-century provincial life, like
 any other
 Romantic, of la princesse lointaine',
 whether remote in
 space or time. All the women he had
 possessed, he said
 once, had been for him only les matelas
 d'une autre
 femme revêe'. And again: 'Madame Bovary,
 c'est moi.'
 Like his heroine, he sighed for strange lands
 —'penser que
 jamais, sans doute, je ne verrai la Chine! que
 jamais je ne
 m'endormirai au pas cadence des chameaux!
 que jamais
 peut-être je ne verrai dans les forêts les
 yeux d'un tigre
 accroupi dans les bambous! He avers that he
 had even
 thought seriously of turning Turk and
 settling (like Can-
 dida with his cabbages on the Bosphorus)
 in some
 Oriental town like Smyrna. At other
 moments his imagi-
 nation roved back in time across the
 centuries, haunted
 by the music of Theocritus and Virgil, or
 homesick (he
 liked to fancy he had really lived then, in
 some previous
 incarnation) for the lurid magnificence of
 Imperial Rome.
 'Je suis ne lyrique/ It was true, though he
 could never
 write verse. He complains to Tourgueneff
 of writers
 like Zola and the Goncourts: 'Ne trouvez-
 vous pas que
 nos amis sont peu preoccupes de la Beauté
 Et pourtant
 il n'y a dans le monde que cela d'important!'
 He laments
 the same lack of it in his own *Education
 Sentimentale*, be-

cause beauty is banished from the modern
world, and
modern subjects do not admit of it. And so it
came about
that he sought wildly for escape from the
sordidness of
Louis-Philippe and the Second Empire in the
streets of
ancient Carthage, peopled with mysterious
multitudes
whose secret has died with them beyond
even his power
to revive, or in the haunted deserts of St.
Anthony or
St. Julian. The past, gorgeous with the
poppies of obli-
vion, could at least yield him opium-dreams.